



## CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

# MAYOR'S NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 6, JUNE–AUGUST

### Dear Friends:

Starting on July 16, the City of Cambridge was rocked by the aftermath of the arrest of Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. The arrest drew national attention, as well as some very heated commentary. The episode exposed some raw nerves in our City, and this prompted high passions, flaring tempers, and harsh words in every direction. Thus, what was originally an unfortunate and regrettable situation had threatened to devolve into something much more ominous.

However, there is reason for some optimism. After the initial uproar, there were some positive developments, and some tentative steps taken towards resolving this matter. The two men involved at the heart of this situation have each declared, during different conversations, their willingness – and eagerness – to figuring out how to move the community past this event, and how to transform this into a teachable moment for their city, and for their country. Moreover, the two men appear intent on working with the Police Commissioner, the City Manager, this administration, and each other to figure out how to bring the entire Cambridge community through this situation in a unified manner. This is of vital importance, as the Office of the Mayor is unquestionably committed to keeping this City whole.

As I have done throughout my time as a public servant, I shall continue to push for public discussions about the issues that impact us all, such as race and class. In the days, weeks, and months ahead, I expect to host and facilitate more of these public discussions, as I realize that only through meeting face to face, learning about each other, and learning about how we all perceive our community can we better identify those areas of our society that need further attention and adjustment. This is not easy work, these are not easy conversations, and this is not a fast process. But I do have great faith in the genuine goodness of our people, and in our collective desire to come through this experience as a stronger, more positive city. No city is perfect, and there shall always be crises that test a community – yet it is how we choose to respond to these moments that ultimately give us an opportunity to learn from each other, and to improve our society.

Meanwhile, the regular, day-to-day work of running the City has continued over the past several weeks, as you will see by reviewing this month's newsletter.

**June 13: Gay Pride Brunch:** In a tradition that spans decades, I hosted the annual GLBT pride brunch at City Hall. The Brunch, which brought together members of the Cambridge GLBT community as well as city and state officials, was an opportunity for the Cambridge delegation to the Pride Parade to meet and mingle before heading to the parade as a team. This year's pride brunch was special: it happened right after the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the granting of licenses to same sex couples in Cambridge. I would like to residents who participated in the brunch and the parade, and would also like to thank local businesses for donating refreshments during the brunch.



**Cambridge Mayor E. Denise Simmons**

Photograph courtesy of Stephanie Mitchell

**June 16: Good Scout Awards Luncheon** – I took a short break from participating in graduation ceremonies to attend the 26th Annual Minuteman Council/Boys Scout of America Good Scout Awards Luncheon at the Hyatt Regency in Cambridge. During the luncheon, awards were presented to three outstanding individuals: Deputy City Manager, Richard Rossi, and Deputy Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Carolyn Turk, received the Good Scout Award for their service to the community. The Lady Baden Powell Award went to Enza Sambataro-Youkilis, President and co-founder of Kevin Youkilis Hits for Kids, a philanthropic organization dedicated to rallying local and corporate support for charities and organizations focused on the health and wellbeing of children. This year, the Awards Luncheon raised \$35,000, which will be used to support scouting programs across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**June 25: 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Taste of Cambridge at Charles Hotel** – An annual celebration of connoisseurs and foodies alike, a Taste of Cambridge drew crowds from near and far who wished to savor an assortment of culinary delights from Cambridge-based restaurants. I was impressed by the dynamism and diversity of Cambridge's restaurant scene; there was a little something to excite every palate. The event was also an excellent opportunity for some good, old-fashioned community building. Our local restaurants are not immune to the economic crisis that is sweeping through the country, and I strongly encourage Cambridge residents to patronize the local restaurants more often. I would like to thank the organizers, the participating restaurants, and the Cambridge residents who took time to sample the culinary delights of our great city.

**June 28: Thomas Cogwell Dedication** – Thomas "Squeaky" Cogwell moved to Cambridge from North Carolina in the 1960's and founded the Squeaky Cleaners business on Hampshire Street, which soon became a Cambridge Institution. Mr. Cogwell was also a long time member of Union Baptist Church in Cambridge. It is appropriate that the square named in Mr. Cogwell's honor is located in front of his spiritual home, at the corner of Main street and Columbia street. I was represented at the event by Deputy Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Carolyn Turk, who recalled Mr. Cogwell's dedication to his community, his church, and his family.

**June 29: White House Gay Pride Reception** – I joined members of the GLBT community in the first ever Gay Pride Reception held at the White House, hosted by the President and First Lady. The reception, which commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, a milestone in the struggle for Gay Civil rights in the US, was an opportunity to take stock of how far we've come as a nation in guaranteeing equal rights for the GLBT community, and how much farther we have to go. Welcoming guests to the reception, President Obama listed some of his accomplishments in this regard, such as signing a memorandum requiring all agencies to extend federal benefits to GLBT families. He is also asking Congress to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act and to enact the Domestic Partners Benefits and Obligations Act, which will guarantee the full range of benefits, including health care, to LGBT couples and their children, as well as efforts to enact a hate crimes bill and an employee non-discrimination bill.

**July 8: Visit with girls at Frisoli Youth Center** – One of the reasons I love serving the people of Cambridge as Mayor is because in this capacity, I also serve as a positive role model and inspiration for girls in Cambridge. So when I was invited to share my experiences with young women at the Frisoli Youth Center, I could not pass up the opportunity. I spoke to the girls about the reasons I became involved in politics, how I juggled career and family—a sacrifice many women have to make everyday. I told the girls not to be deterred from accomplishing their dreams by the dictates of society, or peer pressure. I urged them to be nothing but militant in the pursuit of their dreams.

**July 8: Historical Commission and Public Arts Commission Grant Approval of Prince Hall Monument Mock-Up** – The Cambridge Historical Commission and Public Arts Commission approved, by unanimous vote, the mock-up of the Prince Hall monument designed by artist Ted Clausen. A Certificate of Appropriateness has been granted by both Commissions, which is a major milestone in the realization of this project; my hope is that it will be unveiled sometime before the end of 2009 on historic Cambridge Common. The Prince Hall monument would serve as an educational tool and a draw for tourists when completed. The monument is also evidence that despite the negative media coverage of the past few weeks, our city is still a tolerant and inclusive city.

**July 10: Constituent Drop-in Hours:** In order to remain accessible to the Cambridge electorate, I held drop-in office hours today. Drop-in office hours are an opportunity for Cambridge residents to meet with me to discuss anything of importance to them. I hold office hours every Friday from 8:30 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. Please call to confirm your visit.

**July 13: Meeting with Commissioner Haas to discuss crime in Central Square:** I met with Vice Mayor Seidel and Police Commissioner Haas to discuss patterns of crime and illegal activity in Central Square, and to determine what the Cambridge Police are doing to short circuit this activity. Commissioner Haas was both candid and informative, and he stated that criminal activity has actually been decreasing in the area. He outlined the different police responses to the ever-changing situation on the ground. Commissioner Haas stated that the moving of the Police Headquarters out of Central Square has *not* led to an increase in criminal activity in the area, and he and I also debated the merits of posting a uniformed officer in a stationary location within the square at all times. We shall continue to meet to discuss this situation, as I expect to see continued improvement in the quality of life for those visiting Central Square.

**July 15: Cambridge College National institute for Teaching Excellence Award.** Today, I was excited to share the stage with Dr. Carol Turk and Dr. McLaughlin at a Cambridge College National Institute for Teaching Excellence event held at Emmanuel College. The National Institute for Teaching Excellence is a 4-5 weeks long summer residency program that relies on proven strategies in adult leaning to train teachers. During my speech, I gave my audience a primer on the Cambridge Public Schools, highlighting its diversity and high rate of graduation. Despite these successes, I acknowledged that our school district faces some problems with the achievement gap, which we are working hard to ameliorate.

**July 17:Meeting with Risa Mednick of Transition House:** During Constituent drop-in hours today, I met with Risa Mednick, a Board Member of Transition House, a domestic violence prevention agency, which also provides emergency shelter and transitional and supported housing, to victims of domestic violence in Cambridge. The purpose of our meeting was to talk about Transition’s Green Shelter Project, which will make the shelter more energy efficient and generate investments in a sustainable future for Transition House.

**July 22: Green Jobs Task Force:** The work of the Green Jobs Task Force, which was established last year to create a strategy that will link Cambridge residents to emerging jobs in the green economy, is picking up pace. The task force held a meeting today, which I chaired. The meeting featured a presentation by Amy Perlmutter and Kevin Doyle. The Task Force is currently finishing work on a green jobs training program for the city, which will be released in the next few months.

**July 29: Harvard Sr. Picnic:** I hosted over a 1,000 seniors to the Annual Harvard Senior Picnic. The picnic, which happened under the theme “Take me out to the Ballgame”, featured music from the Never Say Never Band, great ballpark food, and many giveaways. In keeping with the theme of the picnic, Boston Red Sox staff were on hand with World Series trophies from 2004 and 2007; many seniors took photographs with the trophies. I would like to thank my staff, DPW staff and others who worked to make this picnic successful. I especially would like to thank Maryann Jarvis, in Harvard’s Office of Community Relations, who will be retiring this year after 34 years of service to Harvard and to our community.

**July 30: Meeting with Local Clergy:** Today at 7:00 P.M, I met with local clergy to discuss ways of healing, and unifying our community for in the aftermath of the Gates affair, which divided our community along racial and class lines. Despite the short notice, many members of the clergy attended the meeting, which was also attended by Commissioner Robert Haas of the Cambridge Police Department. During discussions great suggestions were made by the clergy about ways to unify bring the city together. I plan to meet with the clergy in September to discuss the possibility of holding unity services in churches and places of worship across Cambridge.

**August 4: National Night Out:** Earlier this summer every week, it seemed, brought news of more violent crime in our city. But thanks to initiatives such as National Night out, we will reclaim our city neighborhood by neighborhood, block by block. Today, on the 26th anniversary of National Night Out, I attended two events: One at Danehy Park in North Cambridge and the other at Riverside Park, with some of my colleagues in the City Council. Both events featured live music, lots of games, hot dogs and, above all, an abundant spirit of community. During my remarks at both events, I recalled the purpose of National Night Out: to heighten crime and drug prevention awareness; generate support for, and participation in, local anticrime programs; strengthen neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships; and send a message to criminals that Cambridge neighborhoods are organized and fighting back. I called on Cambridge residents to be more vigilant about what goes on in their neighborhoods and thanked all those who had worked to make both events possible.

**August 4: Meeting with City Manager and Police Commissioner to discuss Police Executive Review Forum:** Today, I met with Commissioner Haas to discuss the PERF’s review of Cambridge Police procedures as promised by the City Manager in the aftermath of the Gates affair, to ensure that the

events of July 16 do not happen again in Cambridge. The PERF review will be helpful, and I look forward to its findings. I strongly belief, however, that a commission made up of Cambridge residents with a similar mandate as PERF will be helpful in unifying our community. A crisis is a terrible thing to waste and we must not let this one go by without drawing important lessons from it to ensure that we are never in this position again.

**August 4: Unveiling of the new homelessness guide for women in Cambridge:** It is a shame that a society as rich as ours is yet to contain the problem of homelessness. Today, women who have been homeless or are currently homeless in Cambridge, released a resource guide tailored to the needs of homeless women. The Guide, which was published in collaboration with the Multiservice Center, offers some helpful information on things like where to go for help, how to find a shelter, how to find housing, and how to keep looking good in the face of adversity. The publication of this resource is evidence that many of those who are homeless are very resourceful and with a little help from Government, they will quickly get back on their feet. Although I was unable to attend this event, I appreciate the work that went into creating the resource guide.

**August 6: kick-off event of Cambridge Restaurant week:** Our city and its business establishments have not been immune to the economic down turn that is sweeping through the country. The economic difficulties faced by some of our city’s restaurants were highlighted last week when Il Pannino, a Cambridge institution for the past 20 years, announced that it was closing its door because it could not afford high rents. During Restaurant Week, Cambridge restaurants will be offering great discounts on their menu. Our city’s restaurants not only provide good food, they also contribute to the dynamism of the tourism industry in Cambridge and it is imperative that we support them, especially since they are meeting the clientele half-way by offering great discounts.

**Upcoming Events:**

**August 15:** 12 to 4 P.M—Area IV day at Clement Morgan park

**September 10:** Police Auxiliary Dinner.

**Mid September—October:** Women’s History and Health Walks sponsored by Mayor E. Denise Simmons and the Cambridge Women’s Commission: beginning in mid-September through October.

**October:** Italian Heritage Month

To send your thoughts to the Mayor, please detach below the bold line, insert in an envelop, and mail to MAYOR’S OFFICE, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, 02139. Mayor Simmons has walk-in office hours most Fridays from 8:30 A.M to 9:30 A.M. Please call 617-349-4321 to find out when the next walk-in office hours will take place.

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